



Gang-gang

JUNE 2020

Newsletter of the Canberra Ornithologists Group Inc.

JUNE MEETING

Wednesday 10 June 2020
virtual meeting

There will be virtual meeting on 10 June. Arrangements for this are still being organised and COG members will be separately advised of the details, including how to participate.

The single speaker for this virtual meeting will be **Alice McGlashan** on **"Hollow using species and nest box designs for the Canberra region"**.

Many of our local native birds and mammals use tree hollows for nesting or sleeping. Much of the native habitat in and around Canberra has a deficit of old hollow bearing trees, from land clearing and selective removal of large trees for timber and firewood. However, there are numerous wonderful urban gardens and public spaces planted with native plants, while across the surrounding rural regions many property owners like Alice are encouraging native forests and woodlands to regenerate. There is food, and shelter, but not enough tree hollows for our local native hollow using species.

In this presentation, Alice will introduce members to our local hollow using species, and will discuss their unique hollow requirements and nest box designs that have been developed for them. She

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Everyone welcome

Summary/analysis of the past month and what to watch out for this month

After the very busy previous month, the very cold change that swept through at the end of April/early May seemed to very much quieten bird activity in the COG area of Interest (Aoi) for the 4 week period from 29 April covered by this column. This is despite the weather then warming up to around average temperatures with limited rain falling. For example, on the afternoon of 17 May, Mark Clayton and his wife took advantage of the glorious weather and decided to go for a drive just to see what birds were about. They left home in Kaleen at about 1 pm and travelled via Uriarra Crossing all the way to Angle Crossing Road, but could hardly find a bird.

Andrea and I have been doing regular walks in the local area and have been also been remarking on the lack of birds. That same morning we walked

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Grey Butcherbird

Robin Hide

JUNE MEETING *continued from Page 1*

will also cover what materials to use for making nest boxes, bedding to add, and how and where to install nest boxes to ensure they are successfully used.

Lots of mistakes and poor choices of materials were being made by novice nest box makers during the push to make nest boxes for the bushfire affected regions. So Alice spent quite a lot of time creating these resources and answering questions and correcting advice given by others on the various Facebook groups for a couple of months. Life was pretty busy!

Also Alice has compiled a booklet and added key design feature improvements to all the freely available nest box designs. The booklet is available for download at:

<https://nestboxtales.com/bushfire-zone-nest-box-design-and-species-list-booklets/>

As well, she has compiled some information on materials to use and not to use when making nest boxes on a web page, and also in a booklet for people to download at:

<https://nestboxtales.com/nest-box-materials/>



Wood Duck, Crimson Rosella

Alice McGlashan

Summary/analysis of the past month and what to watch out for this month — *continued from Page 1*

3 km and back on the Murrumbidgee Discovery Track from Casuarina Sands and hardly found a bird, including in some of the open patches. We only heard a single **Australian Magpie**, with nothing at all seen on the River. The only exception has been the Molonglo woodland track (starting off the Edgeworth Pond dam wall), where we've managed to find some different birds including 25 species on the morning of 18 May.

It would appear from the summary below that many other birders are still finding some interesting species, particularly when they come across mixed feeding flocks (MFFs) which should remain until breeding starts in July. Also it appears several species seem to be staying longer than usual, or may overwinter in greater numbers.

The very cold change did seem to put an end to the long honeyeater migration season, with just a few small flocks coming to my attention after this. On 3 May Libby Keen posted that for the past month they had had **White-naped Honeyeaters** in large numbers flying, calling and feeding in the canopy all day long, at Harold's Cross just south of the Black Range fire. They had been flocking to the bird baths, diving and splashing together with an occasional single **Yellow-faced**. It was impossible to count them as they moved noisily through the gum trees, sometimes taking off in groups, then circling back into the canopy. They were especially active and noisy on 29 April, the day before the weather changed to very cold, wet and windy, and then frosty. They thought they were preparing to leave, but on 3 May there were still a number around. She noted most of the **Yellow-faced honeyeaters** had left weeks ago.

While this seems to give some further assurance about **White-naped Honeyeaters'** migration numbers being closer to normal, it is possible that these birds came from reserves to the south of her place rather than through the ACT. **Fuscous Honeyeaters** were still reported from 17 locations in May (up from 10 in April and compares with the 50-60 locations for

the above two species in May). However, just two of these were to the west of the Murrumbidgee River, and the maximum number together was three, suggesting this species may have been behaving as an altitudinal, rather than the passage migrant it was once thought to be.

In contrast there were still a couple of notable **Red Wattlebird** migrations reported. Over an hour on the morning of 27 April, Kevin Windle saw around 360 passing over McQuoid's Hill, with roughly 200 birds in one huge flock, by far the biggest reported this autumn. He noted he'd certainly never seen so many at once. The only time I've seen a comparable number was when I led a COG outing at the Cecil Hoskins Reserve near Moss Vale over 10 years ago, and we had a continuous stream (on return migration) going past for most of the afternoon. A much later report was by Bill Graham who on 21 May reported 140 **Red Wattlebirds** flying north along the road opposite the Shepherds Lookout car park.

Of the late-staying summer migrants noted in my previous column, there have been no further accepted reports for the **White-winged Triller**, **Rainbow Bee-eater**, **Sacred Kingfisher**, **Horsfield's** and **Shining Bronze-cuckoo**, **Eastern Koel**, **White-throated Needletail**, or **Leaden** or **Satin Flycatcher**, suggesting the early May cold spell ensured the last of these had left, if they hadn't already. In contrast there have been reports of **Fan-tailed Cuckoos** from 5 locations, further evidence that this is a later leaving, sometimes overwintering, cuckoo.

Likewise **Tree Martins** were still reported from 4 locations, the last at the West Belconnen Pond on 21 May, and **Australian Reed-Warblers** were still reported from 3 locations during the period, again last at the West Belconnen Pond on 21 May. Liam Manderson reported a very late **Rufous Fantail** at Tidbinbilla NR on 17 May. He was alerted to its presence by its call, then a very active bird was seen clearly. The BIRD INFO information on the COG website confirms very few of this species stay into May.

Of the species which usually leave during April, the **Noisy Friarbird** was reported from 2 locations in May, the last by David McDonald at Wamboin on 11 May. While the **White-throated Gerygone** was also



White-naped Honeyeater

Peter Murphy



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Good birding, good food

Tours that are cancelled in 2020 due to Covid-19 will be run in similar timeframes in 2021.

The Pilbara birding tour (NW WA)

13 to 22 July 2020

Karratha, Karijini NP, Tom Price, Newman

The Pilbara birding tour (NW WA)

24 July to 2 August 2020

Karratha, Karijini NP, Tom Price, Newman

Alice Springs, West MacDonnell Ranges, Marla & Yulara

7 to 17 August 2020

Adelaide to Nullarbor Plain

5 to 20 September 2020

Plains-wanderer Weekends 2020

24 & 25 October 2020

14 & 15 November 2020

28 & 29 November 2020

Top End birding tour

May 2021

Darwin, Kakadu, Katherine, Kununurra,
Mitchell Plateau.

Atherton Tablelands

& Iron Range NP June 2021

Plains-wanderer Weekends 2021

16 & 17 October 2021

30 & 31 October 2021

6 & 7 November 2021

27 & 28 November 2021

Please see itineraries, checklists
and latest news on our website.

www.philipmaher.com

reported from 2 locations, last by Michael Lenz at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 8 May, the **Western Gerygone** has been reported from 10 locations in May, and was still present at Mt Stromlo and Campbell Park on 22 May. This is quite remarkable as the BIRD INFO information on the COG website again shows very few of this species stay into May.

Rufous Whistlers were still reported from around 16 locations, at least up to 17 May (one at The Pinnacle NR on 27 May – ed!), the **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike** from around 40 locations, and **Grey Fantails** from around 80 locations. The **Dusky Woodswallow** and **Olive-backed Oriole**, which are usually the last summer migrant species to leave, were still reported from around 30 and 20 locations, respectively, during the period. These five species, some of which will stay over winter, seem to be more widely present later than usual. The **Superb Parrot**, which is also increasingly staying over winter, was still reported from around 15 locations (just 3 south of the lake), in contrast to the **Mistletoebird** which has been reported from only 4 locations (this species usually stays over winter only in small numbers).

So please keep a look out for any remaining summer migrant species still present.

Of the altitudinal migrant species that had not yet significantly moved into urban and peri-urban locations in Canberra, the **Flame Robin** continued to be slow to do so, reported from only around 10 such locations (of a total of around 25) in the period. Surprisingly the **Rose Robin**, usually considered to be at least a partial passage migrant, has been reported from around the same number of locations. This is again a very high number for this species, but so far there have been no reports of the **Pink Robin** in the COG Aol in 2020.

While the **Crescent Honeyeater** has been reported from around 15 locations over the period, only 1 of these (the ANBG) was an urban one. The only **Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters** reported for the period have been from Gigerline NR, most recently on 5 May. There have been no reports of the **Swift Parrot** during May, so it would appear they have found no local winter feeding areas to replace those that have been burnt such as at the South Coast.

In contrast the **Bassian Thrush** was reported from 7 locations during May, though again only one of these (the ANBG) was urban. The **Restless Flycatcher** has been reported from 2 locations, from Pine Island South on 14 May, and from the nearby Tuggeranong Marsh from 3-17 May. Perhaps this was the same bird that has been reported over the last few seasons, mainly by Marnix Zwankhuisen, at the nearby offices' car park, etc. So please keep an eye out for these winter visitors.



Jerrabomberra Wetlands, December 2019, April 2020

Geoffrey Dabb

The only new “unusual” species for 2020 reported for May was an **Intermediate Egret** first reported by Ash Allnutt from Commonwealth Park on 12 May, and then seen by a number of observers up to 13 May. On 15 May Robin Hide reported one at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR, and on 16 May Peter Milburn one from the AIS wetlands in Bruce. A pair of **Blue-billed Ducks** was reported at the Big Dam in the Mulligans Flat NR on 7 and 8 May. The **Musk Ducks** previously reported at Yerrabi Pond and the Tuggeranong Marsh were present for much of the period; the male at the former was last reported on 17 May, but the female at the latter was still present on 24 May.

The family of three **Glossy Black-Cockatoos** at the foot of Mount Jerrabomberra was last reported on 17 May, having been present there for over 6 weeks. There have also been two further reports of the grey morph **Grey Goshawk**, at Narrabundah Hill on 30 April, and at Jerrabomberra Wetlands NR on 4 May. Two **Black Falcons** were chasing flocks of **Common Starlings** at Uriarra East Reserve on 9 May, and one was also reported from Crace Grasslands NR on 16 May.

A **White-headed Pigeon** was reported from O'Connor on 11 May and Ainslie on 18 May, and on 14 May Brian Hawkins reported another two **Blue-faced Honeyeaters** seen and heard flying over Curtin. Lastly **Musk Lorikeets** were reported from 5 locations in the period.

Finally, a bit more space due to the less active period, allows me to alert readers to a couple of species which might otherwise fly under the radar. In early May Rosemary Blemings sent me reports of several observations of the **Jacky Winter** at Mt Rogers. When I checked the eBird Australia map I was surprised to find this species had been recorded at only 6 locations in the COG Aol so far in 2020, and not since 4 April. This compares with the **Scarlet Robin**, which is listed as Vulnerable in the ACT and NSW (and a sighting Rosemary was more excited about), and which has been reported from well over 50 such locations since late April.

So please keep a special lookout for the **Jacky Winter**. At the other end of the scale is the **Spotted Dove**, of which Marnix Zwankhuisen *was* surprised to see 7 together in Forde on 6 May. This species has been present in my local area of Chapman/Rivett since we moved there in 1975, and though the birds have moved around a bit, numbers seemed to be stable for over 40 years until recently. For example, last winter to mid-September there was a group of up to 6 birds often hanging around together in my GBS site. While there have not been more than 2 seen together since, they have been recorded in >75% of GBS weeks. This increase corresponds with the 2018-2019 Annual Bird Report (ABR), which notes that records had continued to climb rapidly that year, to *their highest ever value*.

Despite it being the last month of autumn, there was still breeding activity reported as follows:

- Mark Clayton's previous experience is that, when his pair of **Grey Butcherbirds** that come in for a free handout flew in a certain direction, they had been feeding young, probably in the nest. On 7 May he reported that lately this had been happening again, and that day the female had arrived with a recently fledged young. The male bird had not been seen so he thought it may be off nearby with another juvenile. On 25 May Mark noted that the adults had continued acting in this way and he suspected they were still feeding young, but he'd had only one very quick glimpse of what he thought was a juvenile about a week before. This is another remarkable autumn breeding event. In my 2018 CBN article about the **Grey Butcherbird** breeding in Chapman and Rivett, I noted that according to the BIRD INFO data on the COG website the following has been observed: nests with young in August, October and November, and dependent young from October to March. The young from the second brood in Rivett fledged after mid-December, so in particular Mark's observations seem to have extended the nest with young category by a whole 4 months towards the end of April.
- That same day David Cook posted that unfortunately that morning they had found a dead juvenile **Common Bronzewing** about 10 m from the nest in Wamboin that I reported in my May column. It was headless and tailless, but otherwise intact. He was not sure what the predator could be; it may have just fledged and crashed into something, or was chased, then predated on the ground. He noted the nest appeared to be empty and as the clutch size was usually two, he would keep an eye out for another successful fledgling being fed. On 25 May David clarified that he had seen no obvious sign of this (my experience particularly with the common **Crested Pigeon** is that pigeon/dove feeding can be very difficult to observe as the young are being fed crop milk). However, David noted there were plenty of adults/immatures, with a remarkable 8 **Common Bronzewings** at their bird feeders the other day.
- Unfortunately the **Magpie-lark** nest I reported in Chapman in my May column failed. A bird was last seen on the nest on 27 April, but it was then empty, possibly predated as close examination revealed nest lining hanging over the side. I then found the intact nest, with limited lining, on the ground under the tree on 10 May. Around that time Julie

Clark indicated that the **Magpie-lark** nest at the Big Dam at Mulligans Flat NR was still there, but there had been no sign of the birds during three visits.

- I am aware of another 6 sets of **Australian Wood Duck**, as well as 2 lots of **Pacific Black Duck**, ducklings. Julie Clark indicated that numbers of the **Pink-eared Duck** ducklings at the Big Dam at Mulligans Flat NR seemed to drop slowly over time, but by mid-May 6 of the original 9 seemed to have survived, in the one, possibly combined, brood. On 8 May Anne Fulker reported 2 adult **Black Swans** with 3 quite small cygnets earlier that week on a ride around Lake Tuggeranong, and on 16 May John Bundock reported them nest building in a pond in the Tidbinbilla Sanctuary.
- On 20 May Jean Casburn, Sandra Henderson and Lia Battisson reported continuing **Australasian Darter** and **Great Cormorant** breeding along the Molonglo River west of the Tuggeranong Parkway overpass. However, the number of nests was about half that seen on 6 May, with **Little Pied Cormorants** no longer observed breeding.
- On 25 May Mark Clayton noted he was seeing quite a few **Little Corellas** and **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos** feeding begging young. The latter have also been observed within my local roost sites.

Medium to large single species flocks of **Straw-necked Ibis**, **Galahs**, **White-winged Choughs** (known to blend together in autumn/winter), and **Little Ravens** have been reported during May. However, the most interesting to me was the 140 **Rock Doves** reported by Bill Graham, feeding on newly sown grass covered by straw and bitumen with wheat seeds to pick at, in the developing suburb of Taylor, north-east of Hall. This is the maximum number reported (in Garema Place) in the 2018-2019 ABR, and is an example of how quickly introduced species can move into the new suburbs.

Please also look out for other single species flocks starting to form such as the **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo**. Probably due to my much more restricted movements lately, I haven't seen many of these so far on the verges, median strips, etc, though flocks of up to 90 have been seen flying around my local area associated with my Weston Creek roosts (where total numbers at these remained at 650 birds). A recent local formation has been a very noisy (it can be heard from up to 300 m away around sunrise on still mornings) roost of over 90 **Common Mynas** in Rivett. My experience is that this species moves its roost sites around frequently; a similar-sized one in January lasted for less than a week.

So please watch out for the last of the spring/summer migrants mentioned above, including those overwintering, for the altitudinal migrants, for MFFs and single species flocks, for roost sites and flights, and for any winter breeding activity, as well as a special alert for the **Jacky Winter**. As usual please ensure that all significant sightings are properly reported and end up on the COG database.

Once again my sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to my two main data sources, posting on the COG e-mail Discussion List ("COG chatline") and the eBird Australia database, as well as direct correspondence with me. As always I am very grateful to all involved for publishing this information without which it would not be possible to put this column together.



Jacky Winter

Geoffrey Dabb

Finally, to all readers please remain safe and remember to maintain your social distancing when birding during the continuing COVID-19 crisis restrictions, even as they are currently being slowly relaxed.

Jack Holland

Future Field Trips

COG Trips

Each participant must sign a COG Field Trip Registration Form at the start of each trip and before proceeding on the trip which acknowledges the participant's responsibilities (wording follows). An Emergency Contact Name and Number are required.

"I declare that I am capable of undertaking the trip having discussed with the Trip Leader any limitations I have (e.g. medications, physical), assessed the risks to myself and my property, and ensured that I am adequately equipped.

I will follow the instructions of the Field Trip Leader, and advise them before moving away from the group."

Changes to trips are notified on the COG chatline <http://canberrabirds.org.au/publications/discussion-email-list/> and trips page of COG website <http://canberrabirds.org.au/category/trips/>.

A reminder that COG has a long-standing policy to give preference to members for field trips that can accommodate only a limited number of people.

As Covid-19 restrictions ease, the COG Committee has agreed that COG field trips may resume under the following conditions:

the relevant government has given permission for 20 or more people to congregate (the ACT Government increased the limit to 20 on 26 May)

participants need to register with the leader (this may change later when groups of 50 or more are allowed to congregate)

social distancing will be required

participants should bring and use hand sanitiser as required

individual leaders will be asked whether they are comfortable leading trips and will be under no obligation to do so

trip leaders will complete the registration form to avoid many people handling the same pen and form. Prior registration will be deemed to indicate agreement with the conditions on the form so signatures are not required

people who are unwell must not attend.

COG will hold one outing in June:

Sunday 21 June - Narrabundah Hill - morning outing

The outing to the Narrabundah Hill reserve set for the Easter weekend and timed for the honeyeater migration season had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 restrictions. While the migration season is now over, it is proposed we will again walk the northern and western boundaries of the reserve and, depending on conditions and the species seen, possibly along most of the western one, and either return by the same or a different path. This will be around 4 km on relatively flat ground. We will look for altitudinal migrants and other winter birds such as the **Scarlet Robin** and hopefully encounter a late mixed feeding flock to enliven proceedings.

As at the time of writing the current COVID-19 restrictions limit outdoor groups to 20 people you will need to register for this outing through Jack Holland (6288 7840 or jandaholland@bigpond.com). Social distancing will also need to be observed; the relatively wide track should help with this.

The walk will start at 8:30 am. Meet at the parking area and stile at the NE end of the reserve, at the corner of Warragamba Avenue and Eucumbene Drive, Duffy. Please note that the entry to this parking area is a little tricky, and is in fact about 25 metres past (on the Mount Stromlo side) the T-junction with Warragamba Avenue, and for those driving along Eucumbene Drive from Duffy involves a quite tricky 180 degrees turn, so please take care. Please take water morning tea to have on the track.

Help wanted

Mark Clayton

Nicki Taws and I have been involved with Bob Spiller from the Gunning district who is writing a series of natural history articles for a monthly blog by the Gunning and District Historical Society. So far Nicki and I have assisted in an article on the **Spotted Quail-thrush** in the Mundoonen Nature Reserve and adjacent properties and are looking at another species at present. Bob is keen to try and get some funding to run surveys in the Mundoonen NR and surrounding areas and I have suggested that members of COG may be interested in taking part - the reserve is within COG's Area of Interest. He is especially interested in the **Spotted Quail-thrush** but also in Koalas which have been recorded in the past, and obviously the general natural history of the site. I am still in discussions with Bob as to how things should be planned but have suggested point surveys of 10 minutes is probably the best way to go, similar to COG's Woodland Surveys. We have still to select a time frame for this to be done.

If anyone is interested in helping out could you please contact both Bob bobgunninghistoryblog@gmail.com and me chollop7@bigpond.com

We will try to keep those interested up to date with developments as things progress.
Thank you.



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Lake Burley-Griffin 1964

The article below appeared in the Canberra Times on 11 April 1964, at a time when the lake was still filling for the first time. It was noticed by John Bundock, and may be of interest to readers today. Can you work out what all these birds are?

Rare Birds On Lake

A Canberra bird watcher has identified 46 different species of bird on Lake Burley Griffin this year.

He is Mr. S. J. Wilson, who did his bird watching from January to March this year at the request of the C.S.I.R.O. and the Department of the Interior.

Three of the species, the painted snipe, the spotted grebe (some words missing here) had never before been recorded in the A.C.T. More than 20 other species had been seen only rarely.

Mr. Wilson, who begins his bird watching before 3a.m. had special permission from the department to net and identify the birds, as the A.C.T. is a bird sanctuary.

The rare birds identified by Mr. Wilson were: Brown quail, banded land-rail, marsh crake, dusky moorhen, eastern swamp-hen, coot, hoary-headed grebe, little black cormorant, pelican, marsh tern, white-headed stilt, Japanese snipe, yellow billed spoonbill, royal spoonbill, plumed egret, white egret, white-necked heron, black swan, mountain duck, blue-winged shoveller, pink-eared duck, white-eyed duck, musk duck, little grass-bird.

Rezoning North Curtin Horse Paddocks

Members will be aware that the rezoning of the entire area bound by Curtin, Yarralumla and Adelaide Avenue from broadacre to urban was announced recently. This followed a land swap earlier in the year. The National Capital Authority (NCA) has released National Capital Plan Draft Amendment 95 – North Curtin Diplomatic Estate and Urban Area (DA95). Key changes to the National Capital Plan proposed by DA95 include:

- changing the land use policy of Block 4 Section 106 and part Block 5 Section 121 Curtin to facilitate a new diplomatic estate

- at the written request of the ACT Government changing the land use policy for a portion of Block 5 Section 121 Curtin to urban to allow future residential use

- including the whole area (both Commonwealth and ACT Government land) within Designated Areas to ensure that the NCA has responsibility for design quality outcomes.

A COG member has a GBS site with significant diversity (169 species) including 14 vulnerable species which is directly impacted by this development (see article Page 10).

At its meeting last week the COG Committee agreed to write to the NCA highlighting the ornithological value of the area, in particular the migration/corridor values, and a request for input into any detailed future planning stages.

The public can make a submission to comment on the rezoning which closes 7 July 2020:

Emailed to draft.amendment@nca.gov.au

Mailed to Chief Planner, National Capital Authority, GPO Box 373, Canberra ACT 2600

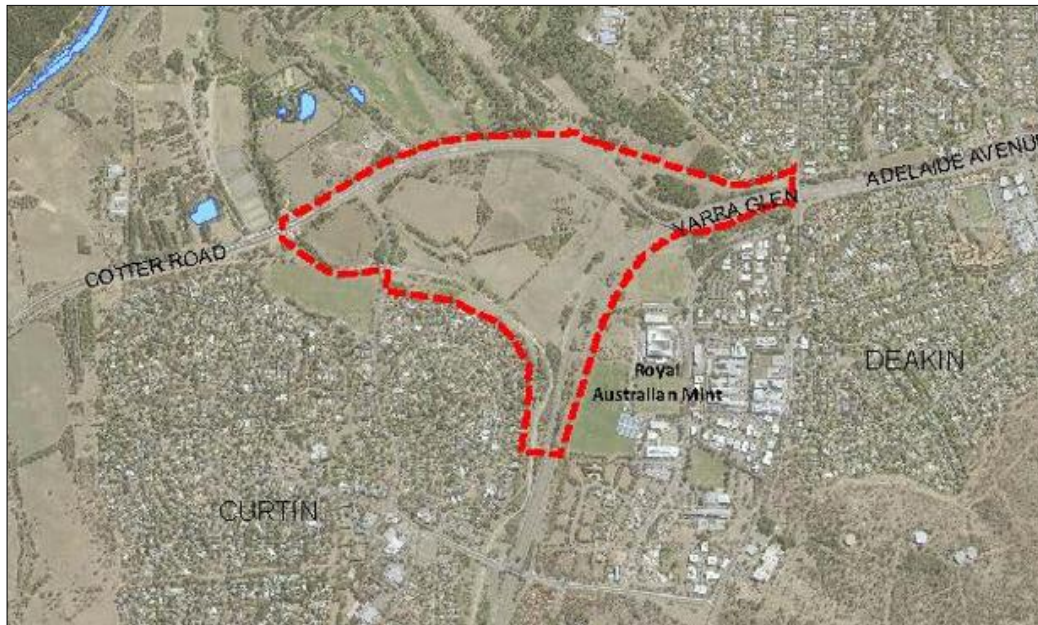
Delivered to National Capital Authority, Ground Floor, Treasury Building, King Edward Terrace, Parkes ACT 2600

Neil Hermes

The Queen is dead!!

Well not quite yet. These two female **Magpie-larks** were in mortal combat at dusk on Saturday. Their estate however is under threat from urban development. The entire area adjoining Yarralumla Creek including bike path and North Curtin Horse Paddock is being rezoned from broadacre to urban.

Many COG members will have fond memories of seeing unusual birds here like **Red-backed Kingfisher**, **Figbird** or **Diamond Dove** and recently a pair of **Cockatiels** with two dependent young (probably the only breeding record for ACT). These sightings though exciting are only significant in that they demonstrate that a wildlife corridor exists here. Regular yearly counts of 100 species (overall 169 species including 14 vulnerable) speak volumes for the diversity and value of the paddock and Yarralumla Creek corridor. I have 85 records of **Little Eagle**, regular returning trillers, whistlers, **Dusky Woodswallow**, **Flame** and **Scarlet Robin**, as well as special records like **Painted Button-quail**, **Diamond Firetail** and **Southern Whiteface**. I was especially excited when two colour banded **Superb Fairy-wrens** dispersed 7km from ANBG. ANU researchers had banded the sisters at nest that spring.



Once rezoned as urban we must consider that this valuable lowland pasture and many of the above species will be lost from the Woden Valley. It is a critical corridor linking the Molonglo with Red Hill NR and south through Woden Valley. Thanks for your support.

Submissions are sought by **7 July 2020**. The NCA's consultation process is provided here and some media articles.

<https://www.nca.gov.au/consultation/national-capital-plan-draft-amendment-95-north-curtin-diplomatic-estate-and-urban-area>

Canberra Times

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6766450/canberra-to-get-world-class-embassy-precinct-with-horse-paddock-rezoning/>

Riot Act

<https://the-riotact.com/ncas-embassy-ambitions-will-destroy-important-bird-corridor-says-curtin-resident/375067>

Richard Allen

A history of bird-egg collecting in Australia: a new book

Ian Mason and Gilbert Pfitzner have produced a large book that fills a gap in the story of ornithology in Australia. It is about egg collectors, so perhaps not a fashionable topic these days. The authors say their intention is to 'acknowledge the invaluable contributions made to ornithology by legions of Australian collectors over more than a century'. The authors make it clear they don't condone illegal collecting, although the lawfulness of much of the collecting described must have been at least doubtful.

The book is a compilation of short biographies of some 300 of 'the most prominent oological Australian collectors' – nearly 500 pages of them. A few 'prominent' collectors are omitted because they did not respond to enquiries or asked to be omitted.

Some of those covered will be well known. There is Edmund 'Ted' Banfield, famous as the resident 'beachcomber' of Dunk Island; Charles Barrett, journalist and RAOU president; Raoul 'Roy' Bell of Norfolk Island; Gordon Beruldsen, known for his own book on nests and eggs; Archibald Cameron and Alfred North, who produced more substantial works on the same subject; the Jardine family of Cape York; Gregory Mathews, whose egg collection went the same way as his skin collection; Henry White of Belltrees, and Captain Samuel White of South Australia; and John Young, the searcher for the Night Parrot.

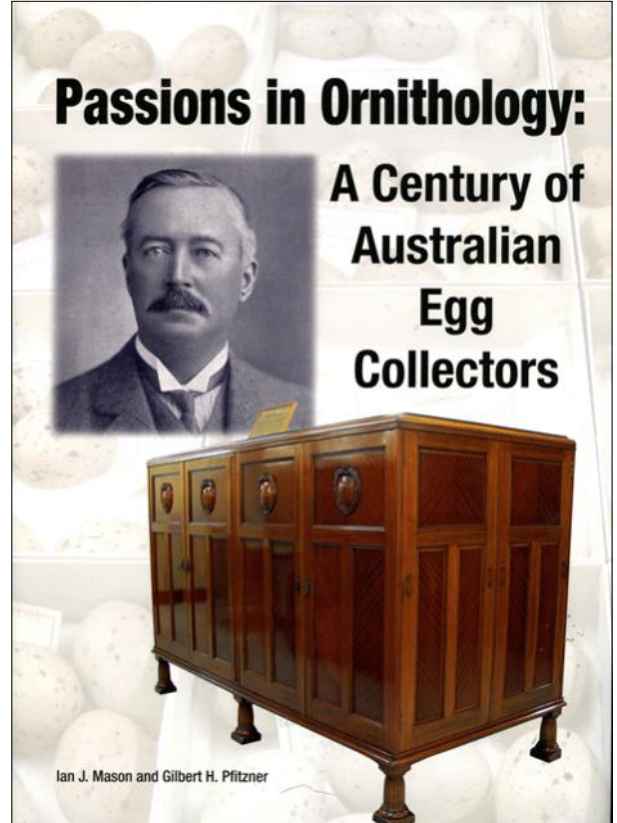
The great majority of entries relate to people whose claim to inclusion is simply the vigour with which they pursued their egg-collecting hobby. As shown in the appendices, that enthusiasm extended to record-keeping. As the authors note: 'In a number of cases, data collected by these oologists (eg, Mervyn T. Goddard and Ernest L. Hyem) is more detailed than that recorded by amateur birdwatchers and even professional ornithologists'.

The qualification to be in the main list is not entirely clear. Charles Barrett's known contribution to the egg cabinet is only 12 clutches, while some of those in the much longer list of 'incidental collectors' achieved many more.

A fascinating series of photographs accompanies the biographies in the main section. Some are of ancient residences, elaborate or humble, some of parties on field trips, perhaps at the campfire or looking at *Leipoa* mounds, and some from social or family occasions clearly unrelated to egg-collecting. There are some early examples of bird photography. With the book comes a CD containing correspondence, record cards and other original material to supplement the biographies.

It is intended to include a fuller review of this book in *Canberra Bird Notes*.

Passions in Ornithology: A Century of Australian Egg Collectors. Ian J. Mason and Gilbert H. Pfitzner. Self-published. 572 pp. with CD. \$95, plus postage if applicable. Available from Ian Mason 0487 196443;email: ianmason@grapevine.com. Also from Andrew Isles Natural History Books.



Geoffrey Dabb

A short contribution on crests and bird names

While the Handbook was passing through the press, individuals of this species graced the Menagerie of the Zoological Society of London, and I trust this fact may induce some of our Australian friends to send others, for no birds would be more highly prized.

To which bird was John Gould referring when he wrote those words in 1865? None other than our **Gang-gang Cockatoo**. The attraction of the bird, we may safely assume, was its striking crest. The genus had earned the name *Callocephalon* ('beautiful head'), the species now being *Callocephalon fimbriatum*, rendered by Jeannie Gray as 'beautiful fringed head'.

I mention here a small selection of other birds with a crest sufficiently noteworthy to be taken up in their naming. First must come the familiar **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo**. The name given by the naturalists who examined the specimen sent back by the First Fleet was simply 'Crested Cockatoo'. In their description the colour of the conspicuous crest was given, elegantly, as 'pale jonquil-yellow'.

According to mood the highly communicative crest of the SCC can be deployed in a range of aspects, by contrast with the less controllable head plumes of the Gang-gang, or the ornate but rigid crest of the peacock, for example.

A third one of our familiar cockatoos, the **Galah** *Eolophus roseicapilla*, is 'crested' in the sense that it can raise its crown feathers. The scientific name refers to the crest imaginatively:

The generic name refers to the pale rose-pink crest, giving the appearance of the rising dawn (Greekeos dawn, and *lophos* crest). The specific name refers to the pink-suffused crown feathers (Latin *roseus*, rosy, and -*capilla*, capped). [HANZAB]

The **Galah** in south-eastern Australia (subspecies *albiceps*) has a 'moderately small white crest sharply demarcated from the deep pink hind neck' [HANZAB]. When feeding or at rest, it usually shows a rounded white cap, with no raised feathers. It is when the crown feathers are raised to expose the pink bases that the extravagant 'rising dawn' metaphor becomes credible.

Then we have that pointy and permanent, but moveable, crest of the **Crested Pigeon** *Ocyphaps lophotes*. Here there is a difference of opinion whether the 'Ocy' comes from the Greek *okua* (a spear) or the Greek *okus* (quick or swift). The crest certainly has a spear-like look to it. However, Gould, who first used the name, might have had swiftness in mind. He said the flight of this species was 'so rapid as to be unequalled by any member of the group to which it belongs'. There is no doubt that '*lophotes*' in the specific name refers to the crest.



We have one bird name with an obscure association with a crest. Professor WB Lockwood in his small but highly-compressed dictionary of British bird names has pointed out that the name 'lapwing' evolved as a combination of two Old English words, something like 'laep' referring to a crest, and something like 'wince' referring to movement of the crest. The name 'Lapwing', originally used for a prominently crested 'British bird', has now been applied to more than 20 related but crestless species, including our **Masked** and **Banded Lapwings**. 'Lapwing', in short, has nothing to do with wings.

The **Sulphur-crested Cockatoo**, showing the range of movement of the crest. The flexibility of the crest contrasts with that of the **Gang-gang**, which has a quite different style of headwear. 'Filamentous' is a word sometimes used for it. It is also rather floppy, not easily controlled by the wearer.



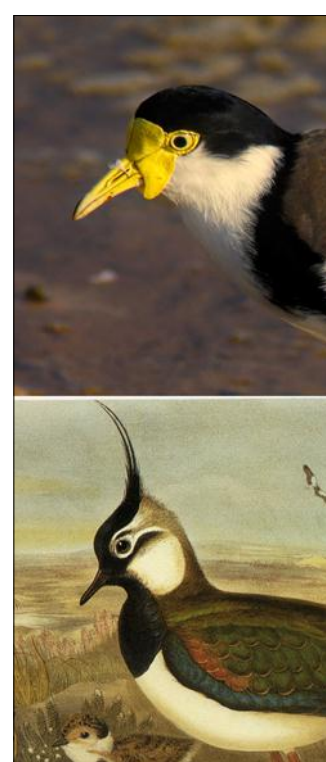
Three views of **Galah** heads, first a feeding adult with depressed rounded crown, then an adult with a raised crest, although a less substantial one than the subspecies in Western Australia. A juvenile is shown, identified by the grey around the face, a bird at an age when the monotonous begging voice is an irritating sound in our suburbs.



The spear-like crest of the allegedly fast-flying **Crested Pigeon**, and the fixed crest of the **Indian Peafowl**. The male is shown here, but both sexes are crested.



The curiously named lapwings. The bird with the jaunty topknot is 'The Lapwing' of the northern hemisphere, taken from Gould's *Birds of Great Britain*. The crestless bird is our **Masked Lapwing**, formerly **Spur-winged Plover** for the dwindling band of observers who can remember that name.



To illustrate the claimed similarity between the Galah's crest and the breaking dawn an attempt has been made in this graphic creation to match the crest with the sky in a well-known 'sunrise' painting. The painting chosen is JMW Turner's *Sun-Rise: Whiting Fishing at Margate* (1822). Margate was a fishing village on the Kentish coast where Turner spent much time. Whiting fishing? Australians might need to be reminded that we are not speaking here of the prized King George or Spotted Whiting but of a small member of the cod family caught in the North Sea and said to be good, when steamed, for invalids. Although I am moving some distance away from the subject of **Galahs**, this was the fish referred to in the Lewis Carroll poem about a whiting and a snail.

Geoffrey Dabb

New Places: May 2020

Murrumbidgee Discovery Track, Cotter Bridge to locked gate

Where is it: I've often walked to the bridge near the pumping station from Casuarina Sands. This time I continued on for a couple of kms, to a locked gate. This is part of the 27km track which runs from Casuarina Sands to Point Hut.

This part of the track is mostly quite easy, and there are some great views of the river. On my initial foray I managed 26 species, with a couple of **Fan-tailed Cuckoos** the highlight. These birds sat on the top of two dead trees on the riverbank just a few metres apart and called constantly for about 10 minutes, before flying back to the wooded slope above the track. On a subsequent visit with three friends, two **Crescent Honeyeaters**, part of a small mixed flock, kept us company for a short time.

Hawkesworth Place Park

Where is it: MacArthur, not far from Fadden Pines. This is a good sized park with some large trees.

Unfortunately I visited on a drizzly morning, but it is certainly worth a repeat visit. The most conspicuous birds were a group of 17 **King Parrots** sitting and looking miserable in the wet conditions, and an **Australian Hobby** dashed through the park. Those who look through eBird lists will know from Liam M's lists that there are also Tawny Frogmouths there, which I didn't see on my quick visit.

Mount Stromlo - lower slopes.

Where is it: just at the start of the sealed road off Cotter Rd, there is a locked gate with gravel road beyond on the right. This was the start of my wander, which followed a loop which at one point met the sealed road again before veering off - these are apparently mainly equestrian trails, and it seems some tracks go through to Stromlo Forest Park.

Not far along the road I ran into a mixed flock which included **Speckled Warblers** and various thornbills. Throughout the area there were groups of small birds, and there are further tracks to explore.

Mount Taylor Horse Paddocks

Where is it: access is from Athllon Drive, but possibly also from the neighbouring suburb (Torrens).

This is quite a large area, mainly grassland, but there are some higher rocky areas with tree cover, which are all fenced. Some fences are easy to negotiate, but in one spot I had to walk along the fence until I found a damaged section to get through. I visited on a cold and windy day, but still managed 18 species. I suspect it might be much more productive in spring. A walk along the fence on the southern side, which separates the bushland from the paddocks, might also be worthwhile, but I'd had enough of the wind before I got that far!



Fan-tailed Cuckoo

Sandra Henderson

Sandra Henderson

Poems by Susan Edgar

Sun on my back

The morning river, with rising mist:
a pelican planes along the surface
and flocks of wood ducks swoop a pool
making a pattern with formal grace.

Freed at last from the frost of night,
robins cling to the sides of trees
and scan for worms in the earth below
then dart and pounce with practised ease.

The river belongs to them and to me
squatting beside the rutted track;
no cars, no men on motor-bikes,
just the bush and sun on my back.



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The Scholar and the Wren

Walking to work in the library,
he climbs the grey slate steps.
A heavy bag is in his hand,
a thesis on his mind.

He fails to see the fairy wren
skittering through the rails
to hide in scented rosemary
where she will build her nest.

For while he sifts old papers
and scans their arcane maps
to clarify the logic
of his academic feats
the wren will also pass a test
and raise a fine new brood.
From break of day
till the sun goes down

she flies to feed and guard
her clutch of cock-tailed facts.

Spoonbills, Wooli

Waiting for you,
I watch the royal spoonbills
trawling up the river
like dancers in slim black tights.
A rainbow floods the birds with light,
transforming frothy skirts
to flamingo pink.

When daylight drains away
they stand quite still, and rapt,
each bird poised above itself
reflected like Narcissus
in the water's moonlit glass.

Canberra Birds Conservation Fund

Donations to this fund are tax deductible. Funds are used to support projects that protect and enhance native birds and the environments that sustain them.

COG membership

2020-2021 memberships:

- Individual: \$50
- Family: \$55
- Institution: \$50
- School student (under 18) \$20

New members

COG welcomes the following new members:

E Cochrane
Z Douch
A Fedoruk
H McAlpin
D Payne (Nature Lodge Optics)
R Redden

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Deadline for July 2020 edition:

Wednesday 24 June 2020

Please send articles, advertisements, updates etc. to the Editors at:

gang-gang@canberrabirds.org.au

or

c/- The Secretary COG,

PO Box 301 Civic Square, ACT 2608

Articles should be less than 500 words (300 for reports of 1-day field trips) except by prior arrangement with the editor.

Photographs (prints or electronic) with or without articles are encouraged.

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